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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER STRONGLY BACKS TFG AT
IGAD MINISTERIAL

CLASSIFIED BY: James C. Swan, Ambassador, U.S. Department of State,
Executive Office; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum strongly backed the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in both remarks made at the December 7 - 8 Djibouti IGAD ministerial, and in a December 7 meeting with AF Deputy Assistant Secretary Wycoff. Seyoum urged strong USG leadership on Somalia. He criticized France for temporizing on sanctions against Eritrea. The Ethiopian Foreign Minister enthusiastically welcomed the TFG's 2010 budget, especially its strategy for funding about twenty percent of it from its comparatively meager revenues. The GoE, Seyoum said, had delivered a "tough" message to Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a, telling it that there would be no Ethiopian support if it did not cooperate with the TFG. German-sponsored TFG police training was underway. Seyoum said that the GoE would train its tranche of 800 TFG police in counterinsurgency tactics. End summary.

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Seyoum Scores French Wobbling on Eritrea Sanctions

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12. (C) Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin opened a long, very positive meeting on the margins of the December 7 - 8 Djibouti IGAD ministerial with AF Deputy Assistant Secretary Karl Wycoff by stressing the need for USG leadership on Somalia. He criticized what he characterized as France's willingness to "appease al-Shabaab" in an effort to free its remaining hostage in Mogadishu by refusing to support sanctions against Eritrea. Eritrean President Isaias, Seyoum said, was a master at exploiting such opportunities to stay afloat, and it had to stop. Wycoff noted that the U.S. would continue to push for the strongest possible UNSC resolution.

FM Says IGAD Will Form Ministerial Committee to Solicit Funds for the TFG

13. (C) While acknowledging that "no country can throw its money into a black hole," Seyoum urged strong international community

financial support for the TFG. The government is weak, he said. It needed not just benchmarks, but help in reaching those benchmarks. Wycoff noted that the U.S. was working with its partners to try to strengthen the capacity of the TFG and stressed that transparency and accountability were key to garnering donor support and beginning the process of developing capacity to govern.

14. (C) The FORMIN said that IGAD planned to do what it could to help the TFG. Seyoum and his colleagues in IGAD had discussed the creation of a "small ministerial committee" that would "sensitize selected capitals" to the TFG's needs. Seyoum had been heartened by the TFG's 2010 budget, which had been presented by TFG Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan at the December 7 session of the IGAD ministerial. He maintained that the TFG's intent to finance twenty percent of its annual budget from its meager port and airport revenues was a gesture of good faith, and he thought that perhaps supplemental funds could be provided by members of the League of Arab States.

15. (C) DAS Wycoff reviewed examples of USG leadership in working towards Somalia's stability, including support for the Djibouti Peace Process (DPP), AMISOM and the TFG. He noted that USG support for the TFG in the security area, included budget support, ammunition, and support to training of TFG combatants. He also noted that it was equally important to focus on the DPP and the effort to broaden the base of support for the TFG and find a

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political approach that would stabilize Somalia. He noted for instance that the USG was pushing the TFG to do better on the public diplomacy and outreach front to the Somali people and had provided material support to this effort. He reiterated that the USG had been a strong and consistent proponent of transparency and accountability for the TFG, noting that this was important in its own right but also key to promoting donor support to the TFG. Implementation of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) financial mechanism was crucial in this regard. Wycoff noted USG engagement in this area and our efforts to promote use of the PWC mechanism, Wycoff also reiterated his belief that it was important that Ethiopia keep as low a profile as possible in Somalia.

Ethiopia Alleges It Pushes ASWJ Cooperation with the TFG

16. (C) Wycoff reiterated USG support for the DPP and the need for the international community to support and promote Somali-led efforts to accomplish political reconciliation and focus on the political aspects of stabilizing Somalia in parallel with the security track of building TFG military capability. The Ethiopian Foreign Minister reviewed for DAS Wycoff the latest GoE dealings with Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ). ASWJ, he said had pushed recently for an "arms-length" relationship with the TFG and had openly hoped that the TFG "would go away." The Ethiopian government, Seyoum said, then told ASWJ that it would not cooperate, if ASWJ did not cooperate with the TFG. ASWJ would receive GoE support only if it cooperated fully with the TFG and, eventually, joined the government. Seyoum believed that those in the ASWJ diaspora were "attempting to manipulate ASWJ on the ground." Seyoum believed that a decision to back the TFG would be taken by ASWJ at the one-year anniversary commemoration of its decision to fight al-Shabaab. If there is an agreement to back the TFG, the GoE, Seyoum said, would proceed with plans to train 400 ASWJ fighters in Ethiopia.

German-Sponsored Police Training Underway

17. (C) According to Seyoum, the German-sponsored training of 800 TFG police was underway in northeastern Ethiopia. He believed that recruits would be sent to the same site from Somalia's Hiraan Region, as well. The training will be low-key, Seyoum said, and would last approximately six months, although the recruits could return earlier, if necessary. In addition to standard police training, the recruits would receive counterinsurgency training in order to prepare them for the environment they would encounter in Somalia. These and similar training efforts were the most that the GoE was willing to do at this point. There would be no further armed incursions, and Seyoum could not imagine a set of circumstances that would "bring us in" to Somalia. Wycoff urged that this training be done to UN standards so that UNDP could provide salary and other support after the return to Mogadishu, which was crucial to continued functioning this force in Somalia's difficult environment. Seyoum confirmed that Ethiopian intended to keep a low profile in Somalia.

Ethiopia Skeptical about Kenya's Lower Juba Initiative

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18. (C) Wycoff raised the question of Kenya's plans for a "Jubaland initiative" and reiterated U.S. opposition to this effort. Seyoum agreed that the Kenyan government's plans to prepare a force for an invasion of Lower Juba would "complicate" matters there. The GOK, he said, continued to believe it could create a buffer zone. Trained troops, Seyoum noted, were a double-edged sword; they could always be turned against Kenya. Seyoum worried that the Kenyan effort might backfire. In mid-November, he had cautioned Kenyan President Kibaki to be careful. DAS Wycoff told Seyoum that Assistant Secretary Carson had told the highest levels of the GOK that the USG opposed the Kenyan initiative and that we would continue to press this position.

Djibouti - Eritrea Tension On Ethiopia's Radar

19. (C) DAS Wycoff noted that the U.S worked to promote stability in the HOA and opposed cross border activities that would lead to instability. Seyoum told DAS Wycoff that Ethiopia was watching the Djibouti - Eritrea border dispute closely. Djibouti was a "lifeline" for Ethiopia, he said, and there are limits to what Isaias will be allowed to do. Seyoum worried that Eritrea was preparing Afar pastoralists for use in an effort to de-stabilize Djibouti. While Ethiopia did not want war, he said, it could not afford to see its supply route from the port of Djibouti disrupted. Wycoff repeated U.S. opposition to nefarious cross-border activities.

Comment

¶10. (C) Seyoum was as bullish about the TFG, but less critical of the international community than Kenyan Foreign Minister Wetangula had been in his meeting with DAS Wycoff (septel). The GoE's initial skepticism about this TFG seems to have evaporated completely. Earlier efforts to search for a potential alternative among the ASWJ factions seem to have yielded little for Ethiopia and, with no obvious alternative on the horizon, the GoE seems to have decided that the TFG can be made to work if it, and the rest of the international community, get strongly behind it.

¶12. (U) DAS Wycoff cleared this message.
SWAN